



Commission on Improving *the* Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room C

- ☒ Dr. Kris Box, Indiana State Health Commissioner, Indiana State Department of Health
- ☐ Christine Blessinger, Director, Division of Youth Services, Department of Correction
- ☐ Senator Jean Breaux
- ☐ Jason Dudich, Director, State Budget Agency
- ☒ Representative David Frizzell
- ☒ John Hammond IV, Office of the Governor
- ☐ Curtis T. Hill, Indiana Attorney General (non-voting member)
- ☐ Senator Erin Houchin
- ☐ Larry Landis, Executive Director, Public Defender Council
- ☒ Susan Lightfoot, Chief Probation Officer, Henry County Probation Department
- ☒ Dr. Jennifer McCormick, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Indiana Department of Education
- ☒ Kevin Moore, Director Division of Mental Health and Addiction
- ☐ David Powell, Executive Director, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- ☒ Justice Loretta Rush, Chief Justice of Indiana
- ☐ Terry Stigdon, Director, Indiana Department of Child Services
- ☒ Representative Vanessa Summers
- ☐ Dr. Jennifer Walshall, M.D., Secretary, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
- ☒ Justin Forkner, Temporary Interim Chief Administrative Officer, Indiana Office of Judicial Administration

1. Welcome and Introductions

John Hammond called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. John requested as a point of privilege to have Todd Meyer, the new Associate Director of DCS, come to the podium and introduce himself. Todd did so.

2. Approval of minutes

Minutes were approved by consensus of members present.

3. Strategic Priority: Child Safety & Services

Presentation: Sue Steib of Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group presented CWG's assessment of DCS. Sue described the methodology of the assessment and presented key data points, findings—including both strengths and challenges, and recommendations.

Discussion: Chief Justice Rush asked whether there was empirical information showing that seeking treatment for substance abuse, apart from other risk factors, was enough to involve a family with DCS. Sue replied that this information was reflected in some of the case files that the assessment team reviewed, but was more frequently reported in interviews with stakeholders from both within and outside of DCS.

Representative Summers asked whether the assessment looked into the question of resources for kinship care providers, as many grandparents are caring for grandchildren without any help, and this is a stress on families. Sue commented that there is discussion in the report of the needs of kinship care providers as well as foster families.

Referencing the finding that DCS spends more on drug testing than drug treatment, Representative Frizzell asked whether the nine new treatment centers recently authorized by legislation were considered in the report. Sue stated that they were specifically mentioned and that when those are operationalized, Indiana will be ahead of the curve of a lot of other states. She stated it still might not be enough to meet the need, because the need is so great right now.

Kevin Moore commented that the nine new centers are specific to medication-assisted treatment for opioids, which is contributing to much of the current DCS caseload, but that it will be important to look at addiction more broadly. He said that the recent 1150 waiver FSSA received will allow more federal dollars to pay for addiction treatment, and that DMHA is looking forward to helping DCS meet that demand for treatment. Kevin also noted that the challenge in front of the Commission is ensuring collaboration among all systems to engage families early and prevent DCS involvement, in addition to having child protection work as well as it can. He noted that the data on rationale for referrals to DCS will provide important information on where to strengthen other child-serving systems that are precursors to involvement with DCS.

Susan Lightfoot expressed support for the report and commended the findings about giving a larger voice to local offices and frontline staff. She felt this could reduce turnover and build greater consistency in services and credibility with families and communities.

Chief Justice Rush commended the report as being very thorough. She said she will always have a lot of questions when it comes to child safety, but the courts and the Commission are ready to be part of the solution—it's not all on DCS.

Representative Frizzell also commended the report. He asked whether CWG had any specific recommendations on data systems that would be better than what DCS has now. Sue said if DCS wanted examples of other states to look at, CWG could make suggestions, but it seemed that DCS was already working to make their current system more functional and productive.

Presentation: Victoria Szczechowski updated the Commission on the Child Services Oversight Committee's plans to meet in July and review the CWG assessment. She said the hope was to have a plan in place by the end of the July 18 committee meeting for a future timeframe on recommendations.

Presentation: Dr. Leslie Hulvershorn and Sarah Sailors presented a brief update on the work of the Child Safety and Services Task Force. Sarah was introduced as the new co-chair of the Task Force. She has been at DCS for 14 years and is now a Deputy Director. Leslie reported that the Child Abuse Prevention subcommittee would be coming to the Commission with recommendations in August, the Safety of Children in State Care subcommittee was just getting going after staff turnover, and that the older youth subcommittee is looking at working across task forces, similar to the trauma group. Leslie reminded the Commission that the Zero Suicide Academy they previously endorsed is scheduled to be held on July 25, and that there were still openings.

Discussion: Chief Justice Rush asked if the Task Force was looking at the CWG recommendation to allow foster care services to age 23, and Leslie replied that the task force was excited about that recommendation and had people who were very knowledgeable on the subject and could serve as a resource. Representative Summers indicated she would be willing to author that legislation, and Rep. Frizzell concurred.

Chief Justice Rush commended Dr. Hulvershorn for her work on the statewide opioid summit and the bench card for judges.

Presentation: Dr. Zachary Adams presented a concept developed by the Trauma and Resilience Subcommittee for feedback from the Commission. The concept is for the Subcommittee to develop a web-based hub for resources, information, and training related to trauma and resilience in the state of Indiana. The group has defined several questions to be answered and some research to be done before creating such a hub, and wanted to know if the Commission approved of the concept before going forth with the research and a formal recommendation.

Discussion: Chief Justice Rush said she was very supportive of the idea, and that trauma-based care was a gold standard for children. Kevin Moore agreed and said that trauma is the underpinning of much of the work that needs to be done and that having a resource like this for providers at both the local and state levels would pay off. John affirmed that the Commission supports the subcommittee's continued discovery on the idea.

4. Strategic Priority: Juvenile Justice and Cross-System Youth

Presentation: Angela Reid-Brown presented a brief update on the work of the Juvenile Justice and Cross-System Youth Task Force. She reported that the Task Force had resolved to work with Pew Charitable Trusts on an assessment of Indiana's juvenile justice system in 2019, and for the remainder of 2018, the group would focus on objective 2.3, which is supporting efforts to decrease youth violence. She indicated that the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children work group is working on the legislatively assigned study topic of law enforcement authority to detain a child suspected to be a victim of trafficking.

5. Strategic Priority: Mental Health & Substance Abuse

Presentation: Sirrilla Blackmon provided a brief update on the progress of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Task Force. She reported that the Task Force has been working to refine its objectives under the strategic plan and reorganize and increase the size of its subcommittees. The task force is working with IDOE and the Educational Outcomes Task Force on mapping mental health, substance abuse, and prevention services available in schools, especially those that are federally or state funded. She also stated that the Task Force will be having some experts come in to testify on the integration of mental health with primary care for children at its next meeting.

Presentation: Elizabeth Darby, Youth Division Director of the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute, presented a federal grant opportunity the CJI is pursuing to develop services for opioid-affected youth. She explained that the focus of the grant is on both preventing and intervening with children, including those who are using opioids and those that are affected by others' use. The work includes developing a state strategic plan in the first year, followed by two years of implementation. CJI's intent would be to bring together the Commission's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Task Force with the Governor's Drug Commission as the planning stakeholder group. CJI would serve as the site coordinator for the grant, and provide data coordination through its research division. There is an emphasis on data sharing, data-driven decision-making, and mapping and coordinating services. Elizabeth also discussed the need to develop protocols and do cross-system training so that front-line staff know what to do when children and youth are affected by drugs.

Discussion: Chief Justice Rush expressed support for the project, especially the idea of coordinating different groups rather than creating a new one, as well as setting up a framework that will help the state not only deal with opioids, but also be positioned to respond to whatever the next drug crisis is going to be.

Representative Summers asked that data be disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and that the effort be inclusive of all communities. She noted that some of the specific drugs that are impacting the African-American community are not opioids but rather marijuana, alcohol, and to some extent cocaine. She said some African-American communities feel left out of the new addiction services and responses being developed because they are not taking the “right drugs.” She made a plea to ensure that any solutions that are developed also have minority communities in mind.

Action: The Commission members present agreed that it was appropriate for the Commission to provide a letter of support to CJI for the federal grant application. Chief Justice Rush also indicated that the Supreme Court would provide a separate letter of support.

6. Strategic Priority: Educational Outcomes

Presentation: Melaina Gant and Cathy Danyluk provided a brief update on the progress of the Educational Outcomes Task Force. They stated that the Educational Passport subcommittee had been stalled, but they were appointing a new co-chair to get it going again. The Mental Health Supports in Schools Subcommittee will be presenting some deliverables at the next meeting, and that committee is also helping IDOE to review a 2006 social emotional and behavioral health plan, an update of which was requested by the State Board of Education. They reported that the School Discipline and Climate Subcommittee was working with IDOE on its survey that was required by HB 1421. Now that some of the objectives are at or near completion, the Task Force will be looking at what to take on next.

7. Committee Updates

Presentation: Tyler Brown presented an update on the work of the Data Sharing and Mapping Committee. He reported that the committee is working to support the Educational Outcomes Task Force with their objective to study and report on the graduation rates of vulnerable youth. Tyler reported that MPH now has data sharing agreements with all of the agencies needed to fulfill the request, and will next be talking with data subject matter experts from the various agencies to identify the data elements needed to fulfill the request. He noted that the Committee has restructured a bit to add some of those data subject matter experts to its roster. Tyler then presented the Committee’s recommendation that the Commission approve an MOU to commit all of the agencies involved in developing the Information-Sharing Guide and mobile app to update their part of the legal information in it each year. Tyler also presented usage statistics for the mobile app.

Discussion: Chief Justice Rush commented that the Commission has been working on the graduation rate of vulnerable youth for a couple of years, and it is exciting to be close to having those numbers, which will allow the state to set goals for increasing them.

Action: John Hammond made a motion to circulate the MOU to the agencies needed to update the app. The motion was seconded and passed 9-0.

Presentation: Kathryn Dolan presented an update on the work of the Communications Committee. She noted that a focus of the past few months has been improving the committee membership to ensure it is reflective of the larger Commission, and thanked Commission members for dedicating their staff to the Committee. Kathryn reported that the Committee’s primary task currently is supporting the Executive Director with the upcoming annual report. She reminded the Commission of the timeline for the annual report, which was approved at the previous meeting, and indicated that the Communications Committee was working on ways to promote the annual report as well as the work of the Commission throughout the year. For example, the Committee will consider how to promote the information-sharing app when it reaches the milestone of 50,000 interactions.

8. Executive Director Updates

Presentation: Julie Whitman provided an update on recent speaking opportunities at the state conferences for Systems of Care and First Steps. She described how she is gathering input from the field on the Commission's strategic plan, and will report on that feedback at a future meeting. She also asked Commission members to share with her additional opportunities to get in front of groups and spread the word that collaboration is happening at the state level. Julie also reported that she had updated the bill tracker with additional legislation passed during the special session, and that the strategic plan tracker was also updated and included in the packet. The Task Forces are using the strategic plan tracker when they give their updates to the Commission on their various objectives.

Discussion: Representative Summers stated that it had come to her attention that when children are removed from their home by DCS, they typically have to go with the case worker to a DCS office while they await placement. She asked that there be consideration of creating a respite home or some type of home-like facility where children can go while they await placement, instead of having to sit in an office and keep quiet. Children are already in a traumatic situation when being removed, so it would be good to be able to provide them with an environment that feels more familiar and comfortable while they are waiting to be placed.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.